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Plan Your Slip Covers

By Magdalene Pfister
Home Furnishing Extension Specialist

Slip covers with a "custom made" look are not difficult to make. Careful planning and preparation is important. Before starting to make a slip cover consider each of these preliminary steps:

SELECT FABRIC CAREFULLY

The wise choice of fabric is important in making a satisfactory slip cover. Some materials are easier to work with than others. Charm and individuality can be added to a room through choice of color, design and texture.

Color...choose a color that will harmonize with, or repeat, a color already in the room. Bright colors may make the other furnishings look faded. Large chairs require softer colors while smaller chairs may be covered with brighter colors. Figured materials are more pleasing if the colors are closely related in value so that the contrast of light and dark does not create a spotty effect. Select medium colors if your chairs receive hard wear.

Design...if this is your first slip cover, you will be wise to select a plain or all over pattern. It takes more time and patience to locate large designs and match stripes. It also takes more material.

If there is little design in your room, a figured material may add interest. Choose a pattern that is in scale with the piece of furniture. A large overstuffed chair may be covered with a larger figure than a small slender chair. Avoid a large patterned material in a small room regardless of size of the furniture. Conventional or geometric patterns are most pleasing.

Texture...in general a smooth texture is more satisfactory than a rough nubby weave because it is more closely woven. Usually it will shrink less and will not pull out at the seams as readily. Avoid material with long surface threads since they snag easily.

Durability...firm, closely woven sunfast fabrics from strong, tightly twisted yarns are suitable since they usually tailor well, are easy to handle, hold their shape and stop dust from sifting through. Avoid fabrics that ravel. Special finishes such as crease resistant, dust and water repellent, help to make fabrics effective for slip covers.




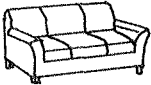
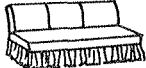
Shrinkage Control...look for information concerning shrinkage on selvage or hang-tags. If you see "Sanforized" or the statement "average residual shrinkage, will not exceed 1 percent" the slip cover can still be used after laundering. If you see such terms as "Preshrunk" or "fullshrunk" look for the amount of shrinkage remaining.

If a fabric does not carry a definite guarantee, test it for shrinkage. Baste mark a twelve inch square at one corner of the fabric. Wash this in the same way the slip cover would be washed, dry and press gently so as not to stretch the cloth. If the fabric measures 11 3/4" or less the fabric should be shrunk before making the cover.

DETERMINE AMOUNT OF FABRIC

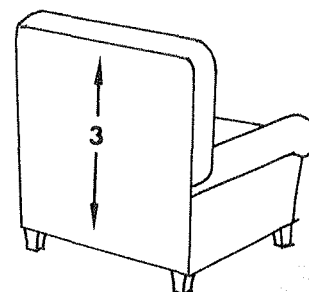
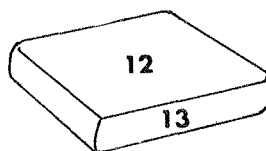
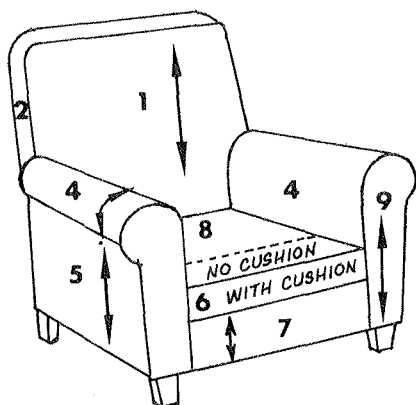
The amount of fabric depends upon the size and shape of chair, whether plain or figured fabric is used, the width of fabric and the style of the slip cover desired.

Yardage Chart...here is a table of average yardages. Notice the extra fabric required for material with a design.

		Plain Material		Figured Material	
		36-inch yards	48-inch yards	36-inch yards	48-inch yards
	Armchair, with cushion	8 1/2	6	10	7
	Wing chair separate cushion	9 1/2	7	11	8
	Platform rocker, no cushion	8 1/2	5 1/2	12	6
	Sofa, with 3 cushions	20	12	22	14
	Studio couch, three pillows	14	9	16	10

How to Measure...follow the sketch below as you measure the parts of the chair. Each number indicates a piece which you will measure both length and width.

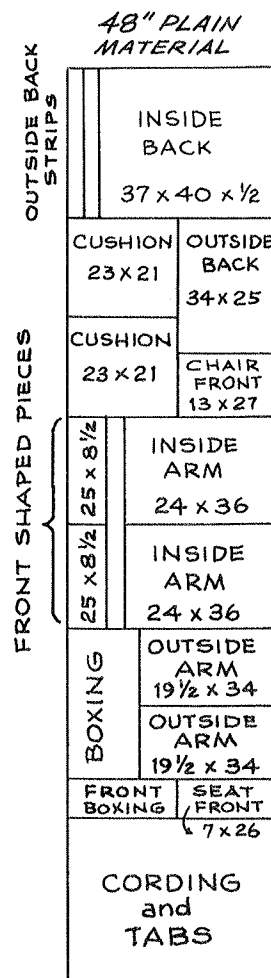
Length measurement is always on the up and down, or the warp of the fabric. Allowance is made for 1-inch seams, 6-inch tuck-ins at seat base and a 2-inch turn under at bottom of chair. Follow directions on next page and record measurements.



	How to Measure	Length	How to Measure	Width
1. INSIDE BACK	from highest point of center back to seat +7"		across widest part of back, or from seam to seam +2"	
2. BACK BOXING	greatest length +2"		greatest width +2"	
3. OUTSIDE BACK	from highest point at top of chair to bottom +3"		across widest part +2"	
4. INSIDE ARM (measure for 2)	over the widest part of arm from outside seam to seat +7"		across the widest part of arm +5"	
5. OUTSIDE ARM (measure for 2)	from under arm seam to lower edge of chair +3"		across widest part of outside arm +3"	
6. UPPER FRONT SEAT SECTION (for chair with cushion)	from seam under cushion to cording lines along the front of chair +2"		across the front of chair +6"	
7. LOWER FRONT CHAIR SECTION	from cording line to bottom of chair +2"		across total width of chair +2"	
8. SEAT SECTION (for chair without cushion)	from inside back to cording at bottom front +7"		across chair, arm to arm +12"	
9. FRONT SHAPED ARM PIECE (measure for 2)	longest part +3"		widest part +2"	
10. INSIDE WING (if used) (measure for 2)	greatest length +2"		greatest width +2"	
11. OUTSIDE WING (if used) (measure for 2)	greatest length +2"		greatest width +3"	
12. CUSHION (measure for 2)	across longest part +2"		width +2"	
13. CUSHION BOXING	distance around cushion +2"		width +2"	
14. FLOUNCE	allow 1-1/2 to 2 times distance around chair for a gathered flounce. box pleats require 2 to 3 times the distance.		Measurement for flounce: Depth of flounce + at least 1" for hem.	
15. CORDING	measure length of all main seams on chair and cushion, and top of flounce if used. Average chair will use approximately 10 to 12 yards of cording -- 1/2 yard of 48" or 54" material will cover 15 yards of cording. Two yards of 36" material will be needed for 15 yards.			
16. TUCK-IN TABS	Average chair will require four 6" x 10" rectangular pieces, two 3" x 10" rectangles, and four 3" x 8" bias pieces. These usually can be cut from scraps.			

BLOCK YOUR PATTERN ON PAPER

1. Cut paper pieces to scale for each chair piece measured. Use a scale of 1 inch to each 6 inches: For example, if the back measured 36" x 24", you would cut a paper block 6" x 4".
2. Write the dimensions on each block and have an arrow showing length measurements.
3. After blocks have all been cut, arrange on a paper pattern which is the same scale as fabric width.
4. Place the blocks so that the slip cover may be cut with least amount of material. See illustration. Allow for tuck-in-tabs.
5. If you are planning to have a fabric with large florals, plaids, or stripes, you will need more material. The size and spacing of designs must also be considered.
6. When you have placed all the blocks on the paper draw a line around each block in order to show a pattern layout for cutting. Write in the name of each piece and the measurement.
7. Save the small paper blocks to attach to your fabric for further identification when you cut or tear each piece.
8. Measure the paper on which the pieces have been laid and determine the exact amount of fabric to buy.



ASSEMBLE SUPPLIES & TOOLS

Suitable material of ample yardage
 15 yards soft cotton cord - medium size
 Heavy duty thread same color as fabric - one 300 yd. spool usually is enough
 Box of sturdy pins; bank pins are good
 A wrist pin cushion
 "T" pins, safety pins or corsage pins for anchoring fabric - 2 dozen
 Tape measure and adjustable seam gauge
 A square or yardstick - a square is more accurate
 Tailor's chalk
 Sewing machine with cording or zipper foot
 Curved needle, 1 1/2" - 2"
 Zipper or snap tape for closures -- 2 yds. snap tape; 2 - 18" zippers for back;
 1 - 30" zipper for cushion
 Saw horses, boxes or chairs to raise piece of furniture from floor

PREPARE CHAIR

1. Brush or vacuum to remove all dust
2. Clean any soiled places with solvent or detergent. Oil from head rest and arms may come through new fabric
3. Refinish the legs or other wooden parts if needed
4. Pad any hollows; patch badly worn spots
5. Remove wooden pieces that can be taken off if it will make the slip cover fit better
6. Repair sagging springs in back or cushions